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Fidgeting in Hong Kong adolescents and its associations with physical activity and weight status

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Introduction

What is fidgeting?
• Fidgeting is the engagement of physical movements which are not vital to the current focal tasks
  • Ex. tapping feet, twirling hair
• Energy expended may accrue to have a significant impact on total daily energy expenditure
• Potential implications on obesity
• Studies on fidgeting are few and none have been conducted in Hong Kong adolescents

Objective: To investigate the prevalence of fidgeting in Hong Kong adolescents and its associations with physical activity and weight status.

Methods

Study design
• Hong Kong Obesity Surveillance (HKSOS) Project 2006-07
• 42 randomly selected schools
• 34678 students (mean age 14.6, SD 2.0, boys 44.1%)

Measurements (Questionnaire)
• Fidgeting (“Has anyone described you as can’t sit still/never stopping/always fidgeting?”)
  • “Always”/“Sometimes” → Fidget
  • “Rarely”/“Never” → Non-fidget
• Weight and height
• Exercise
• Non-exercise physical activity (NEPA)
• Sedentary screen time (TV and computer use)

Analysis
• Logistic regressions
  • Adjusted for potential confounders and school clustering

Results

Key Message 1: Prevalence of fidgeting was 38.2% (95% CI 37.7%-38.7%)

Key Message 2: Fidgeting was associated with increased levels of daily exercise, non-exercise physical activity (NEPA) and screen time

Key Message 3: Fidgeting was not significantly associated with weight status
  • Adjusted odds ratios (AOR, 95% CI) below:

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<tr>
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<th>Underweight vs. normal</th>
<th>Overweight/obese vs. normal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-fidgeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidgeting</td>
<td>0.93 (0.82 – 1.05)</td>
<td>0.96 (0.88 – 1.04)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Conclusions

• Fidgeting is prevalent in Hong Kong adolescents
• Fidgeting is associated with exercise, NEPA and screen time
• Our results do not support an independent association between fidgeting and weight status
• Implications: Future studies should investigate whether discouraging fidgeting is harmful and encouraging fidgeting is beneficial to exercise and NEPA levels

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